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Housekeepers' Chat

Wed., Oct. 19/27

(Not for Publication.)

Subject: "Comforts and Counterpanes."

ANNOUNCEMENT: The following program is a rather thorough discussion of beds and bedding, from counterpanes to bedsteads. Information, including dinner menu, approved by U.S. Bureau of Home Economics.

Announcer's Attention: Please mention "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes" as often as you consider it advisable. The book, containing 300 tested recipes and over 50 menus, will be ready for mailing the last of this month. As soon as the books are off the press, an advance copy will be sent to you. Please forward all requests for cookbooks to this office.

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I wonder if you ever feel the way I did yesterday afternoon. I was so tired, of housework, that I simply quit, for a few minutes, and sat down on the back porch, to sympathize with myself. Pretty soon, Fred came home from high school, swinging a tennis racket.

"Why so blue, Aunt Sammy?" asked Fred, dropping his geometry on the step. "Want to play a game of tennis?"

"Yes," I said, "that's just what I need, to take my mind off my work."

We walked over to the high school tennis court, and Fred beat me gloriously. I didn't care. The fresh air, and the exercise, cured me of the blues, and after that I didn't mind getting dinner. It was a good dinner, too. I'll tell you about it later. First, I must say something about "comforts and counterpanes," because that's my subject, and when one has a subject, she is morally bound to say a few words about it.

I looked at comforts and counterpanes in the department stores this week. As you know, both cotton and wool batting are used as filling in comforts. Wool batting, though more expensive than cotton, is warmer in proportion to weight, and easier to clean. One can buy wool and cotton bats, covered with cheesecloth, and ready to be covered again, with any pretty light weight material desired.

There were many cotton and wool comforts, covered with attractive printed cottons. One beautiful, soft, light weight comfort, filled with wool batting, was covered with rose-colored rayon. I asked the salesgirl whether this particular piece of rayon was a durable fabric. She assured me that it was durable, and that the rayon on the market now, is much better than the rayon first placed on sale.

When I told her I was interested in materials for comfort coverings, she showed me a cotton print, made in a blue and white pattern, to simulate an old-time pieced quilt. It would be charming, in a quaint, old-fashioned bedroom. I suppose every housewife in the land has a number of pieced quilts, either inherited, or made by herself. Many of them are remarkable samples of needlework. I wonder how many of you own what we used to call "Friendship" quilts. My mother had one, made of pieces only an inch square. Each little piece, was supposed to have been donated by a different friend. I use the quilt as a counterpane now, in my guest room.

The salesgirl showed me any number of attractive counterpanes; some in rose and blue rayon; others in unbleached muslin, trimmed with candlewick embroidery, in blue and rose and green; and still other spreads of the popular material known as ripplette. All the counterpanes I saw were inexpensive. One could afford to have two of them, for each bed and thus keep the bed always looking fresh.

From the counterpane department, I entered the blanket section. Such a colorful array of blankets, I had never seen before. They were so goodlooking that I bought an extra one for my guest room -- a pink and white blanket, all wool, with a firm, pink silk, binding. The blanket is firmly woven, of heavy yarn. When the nap becomes matted down, I shall have the blanket re-napped, so it will again be soft and fluffy. It is the fluffy nap that makes blankets warm. They can be re-napped at home, or in a cleaning establishment which has a napping machine.

Sheets and pillow cases I looked at next, and bought four of each. I find that it is usually more economical, for me, to buy sheets and pillowcases than to make them, although the home-made bed linen sometimes fits better. I buy my sheets from 24 to 36 inches wider and longer than the mattress, so that the ends and sides can be tucked in, and the top of the upper sheet turned down to protect the blanket. The hem at the top of the sheet should be at least 2 1/2 inches, and the bottom hem from 3/4 to 1 inch. Machine hemstitching is a pretty finish for pillow cases, and the wider hems of sheets. Good handwork is also pretty on bed linen, but personally, I'd rather have a generous supply of plain sheets and pillow cases, than a limited supply of fancy ones. A little handwork, well done, is more effective than a larger display. Plain white initials, or monograms, are the prettiest marking for household linen, and I envy the women who can embroider them neatly.

There's one more piece of bedding to be mentioned, and that's the light weight washable pad, which covers the mattress. Some people find it economical to buy them ready-made; others make them of muslin and cotton batting, or use old light-colored quilts, or cotton blankets.

Now we've discussed everything but the bedstead, and the mattress. The bed is the most important piece of furniture in the bedroom, for in it we spend about a third of every 24 hours, provided we don't attend too many movies. Suitable bedsteads are made of wood or painted metal, in simple design. Elaborate carving collects dust, and brass trimmings tarnish.

However, whether a bed is comfortable or not, depends on the springs and the mattress, rather than on the bedstead. The springs should be substantial enough

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to support one's weight, without sagging too much in one place. At the same time, the springs should "give" enough to make the bed comfortable. A somewhat hard bed is considered more healthful than a very soft one.

Some of the best and most durable mattresses are made of curled hair. This is expensive, but it can be renovated from time to time. Felt and cotton also make good mattresses. Plain striped ticking, of good grade, is preferable to a light weight ticking, with a flowered design and loose weave. Unbleached muslin makes an excellent cover for the mattress.

There's nothing left now but the pillow. Sleeping without a pillow is recommended by many health authorities. Whether one uses it or not, at least one pillow is needed to make the bed look complete. Pillows may be kept clean in close-fitting, thin, muslin covers, buttoned or basted at one end, so they can be slipped off occasionally, and washed.

Thus ends the talk on "Comforts and Counterpanes" and at last I have a chance to tell you of the dinner I served last night. When Fred and I came home from the tennis court, we found Uncle Ebenezer in the kitchen, reading the paper.

"Aunt Sammy," said Uncle Ebenezer, solemnly, "you needn't fix much food for me tonight. I'm not very hungry."

After Uncle Ebenezer left the kitchen, Fred turned to me: "Better cook an extra big dinner tonight," said Fred, "because when Uncle Ebenezer says he isn't hungry, he eats more than anybody else in the family," Which is quite true.

For dinner I had Creamed Dried Beef, Baked Potatoes, Cabbage and Beet Salad, and Apple Dumplings with Hard Sauce. I added a plate of sliced cheese, for Uncle Ebenezer's benefit. I'll repeat the menu, so you can copy it in your notebooks: Creamed Dried Beef, Baked Potatoes, Cabbage and Beet Salad, and Apple Dumplings with Hard Sauce.

I think the Baked Potatoes were responsible for the ridiculous dream I had last night. I dreamed that Fred and I were playing tennis, using baked potatoes for tennis balls, and that Fred suddenly shouted: "Look out, Aunt Sammy! You're certainly do serve a mean baked potato!"

Tomorrow we'll see what we shall see, and I think it will be something about easy meals to prepare en casserole, with a dinner suggested by the Menu Specialist of the Bureau of Home Economics, and a new recipe.

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